



CAMDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Camden City School District Shares Fiscal Concerns and New School Configuration Plans

Fiscal and facility challenges lead to a new school configuration plans in Centerville and East Camden to start 19-20 school year and align with key priorities in District's Strategic Plan

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 [Camden, NJ] – Camden City School District continues to face a budget deficit each year- which jeopardizes the district's ability to continue to infuse funding into classrooms. Each year, it gets harder and harder to close the gap, and still invest in new strategies that support the district's academic vision. This year, the district continues to make hard fiscal choices, thinking differently about how every dollar received is allocated.

The district is still working to close its budget gap for next year- through creative ideas and advocating for new revenue. "We know a high quality education is the best salve for many of the challenges our students' face, and putting students first means putting every dollar we can into improving academic achievement," stated Acting State Superintendent Katrina McCombs. "We know that in order to overcome continuous budget challenges each year, we must have an aggressive plan to align the number of schools we operate to the number of students we educate in district."

"Even if we close our budget gap for next year, it wouldn't be enough to solve the long-term enrollment and facilities issues our schools face. In order to keep resources in the hands of teachers and students- we must make changes for next year," stated McCombs. "This has been an excruciating time for me to come to these decisions- and I know how difficult a school closure can be- because I have had to close several schools myself. Yet, I know that it is essential for our long-term sustainability. To ensure we are doing what is right for our students, we need to make choices that give our students as many resources as possible to support their education – even if that means in fewer school buildings."

For the 2019-2020 school year, the new configuration plan calls for a new early childhood school at what is currently the RT Cream Family School in the Centerville neighborhood of the city, with students who currently attend RT Cream moving into open seats at the higher performing H.B. Wilson (K-5) School and Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy (6-8). In East Camden, students who currently attend the Veterans Memorial Family School, a crumbling building that needs approximately \$14M in investment, will move into two safer, healthier and higher performing facilities, the Henry H. Davis Family School and the Alfred Cramer College Preparatory Lab School, where a new dual-



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language academy will be offered. This plan not only places students in higher-quality facilities, but places more students in high performing school environments across these neighborhoods.

The new configuration plan was shared with impacted staff directly on Wednesday and Thursday, and in a letter sent home today. After meeting with staff at each of the affected buildings directly, district leadership will meet with parents and community members in the coming days to gather feedback on the best way to create a smooth transition to the new configurations, and most importantly to offer support for families with enrollment needs or other questions.

At a board meeting on March 26, Acting State Superintendent McCombs shared that the school district is working to close an existing budget gap through creative cost savings and identifying additional revenue. She also noted that there are on-going discussions about possibilities for a \$30M facilities bond measure and approximately \$120M in requests for the School Development Authority that could bring additional facilities investments in the District. Results of these talks will dictate all other financial next steps, but the District is moving forward proactively with plans that better position Camden families in these neighborhoods regardless of funding outcomes.

“I am excited to hear about the new programs being presented, and as a parent, I also appreciate the district’s proactive approach in this effort,” shared Bryan Morton, Executive Director of Parents for Great Camden Schools. “We understand that not all change is easy, but by communicating with parents and inviting the entire community to provide feedback on how to make this process work best, the district has put parents in a position to work as partners to ensure that all our children and families at these schools get the support they need to make this transition.”

The Camden City School District invites any parents and families in these school communities with questions about these plans to reference the FAQ document on the district’s website, or to contact their local school administrator for more detail about upcoming informational meetings.

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